

# New Internationalist

The people, the ideas, the action in the fight for global justice

## AFTER EBOLA

New Internationalist  
Easier English

Ready Intermediate  
Lesson



# This lesson:

**Quiz:** reading / speaking about Ebola

**Speaking:** predicting stories from photos and headings

**Videos:** watch to check predictions

**Reading:** read to prepare for speaking/writing

**Speaking:** discussing the stories

**Writing:** a short report



**1. Which 3 countries were most affected by Ebola?:**    *a) Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte D'Ivoire    b) Ghana, Guinea and Senegal    c) Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone*

**2. How much money did the economies of the 3 countries lose because of Ebola?:**    *a) \$3 - 4 billion    b) \$3 - 4 million    c) \$3 - 40,000*

**3. About how many people died of Ebola in Africa?:**    *a) 18,000  
b) 11,000    c) 7,000*

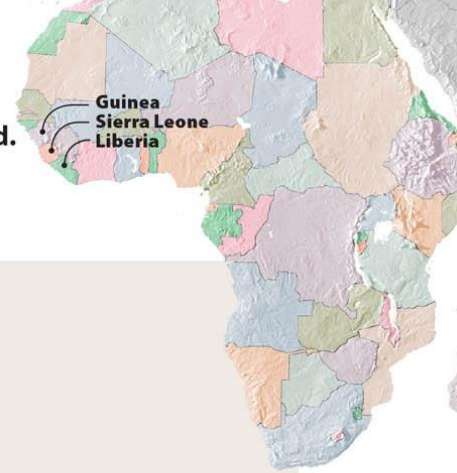
**4. How many people died of Ebola outside Africa?:**    *a) 15    b) 150  
c) 1500*

**5. When were the last new cases of Ebola in the epidemic?:**  
*a) January 2015    b) August 2015    c) November 2015*

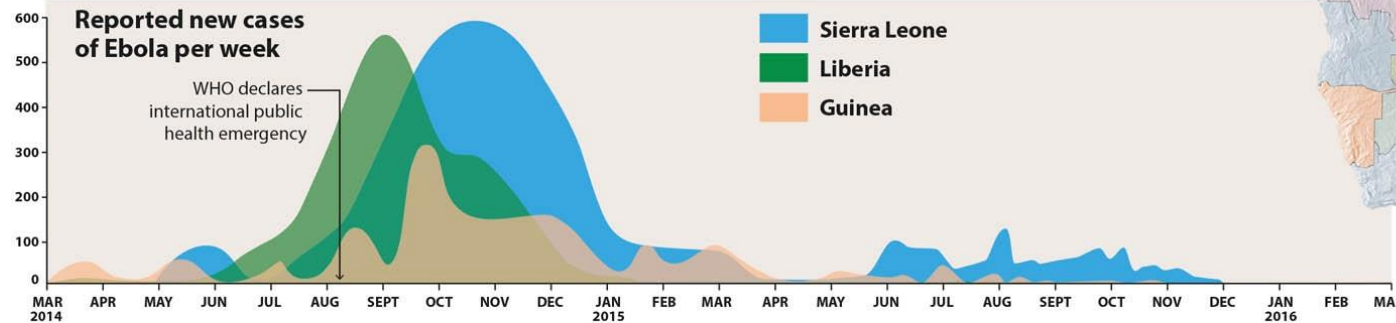
**6. In the UK, there are 280 doctors for 100,000 people. How many doctors are there in Sierra Leone for 100,000 people?:**    *a) 2    b) 20    c) 200*

# Ebola facts

In 2014, the Ebola haemorrhagic virus spread through West Africa. It was the longest, and most widespread outbreak in history, killing more than all past episodes combined. The three countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia were hardest hit.



## Spread of the virus<sup>1</sup>



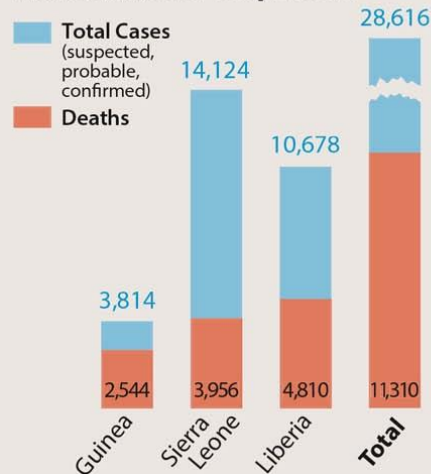
## Mortality rate

Spread by bodily fluids, Ebola is less infectious than measles or chicken pox. But it is one of the world's most deadly diseases, after HIV and rabies.<sup>2</sup>

**50-90% mortality**

**60%**  
latest outbreak

## Global breakdown of Ebola cases and deaths, as of 13 April 2016<sup>3</sup>



In the rest of the world, there were 36 cases and 15 deaths.

## Poverty spreads Ebola

**3x**

more slum-dwellers were infected than the wealthy in Liberia<sup>4</sup>

## Economic impact<sup>9</sup>

**\$3-4 billion**

losses to the economies of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia out of a combined total GDP of \$50 billion

## Ebola response

### Emergency medical and humanitarian aid

UN agencies, development banks, national governments and NGOs stumped up large sums to contain and control the outbreak.

**\$5 billion** estimated amount made available for global Ebola response<sup>8</sup>

**\$1.5 million** cost of a 100-bed Ebola isolation facility<sup>9</sup>

### Health services context, Sierra Leone

**136** doctors for 6.2 million people<sup>10</sup>

**\$12** government spending on health per person (2013)<sup>11</sup>

**\$61.3 million** government health budget in 2015

### User fees block access

**76%** of overall spending on healthcare paid for by individual households, upfront<sup>12</sup>

**30%** of Sierra Leoneans – the poorest – do not seek care<sup>13</sup>

### Doctors per 100,000 people<sup>14</sup>



5 stories: what do you think is the story behind each picture?



Match the stories to the headlines, then write 3 sentences for each story:

1.'My father's grave.'

2.'I speak for the girls.'

3.'Love without touch.'

4.'My husband helped me to survive Ebola.'

5.'These are the boys that fought Ebola.'

a)



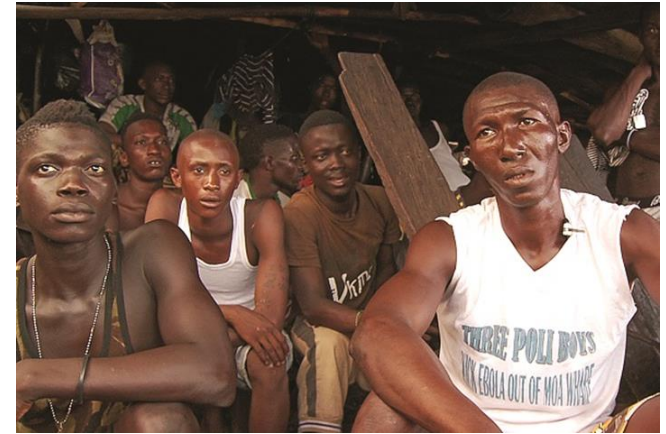
b)



c)



d)



e)



# Watch these (2 – 7-minute) videos to check what the real stories are:

1/ My father's grave

<https://backintouch.org/story/#finding-my-fathers-grave>

2/ I speak for the girls

<https://backintouch.org/story/#the-baby-is-ours>

3/ Love without touch

<https://backintouch.org/story/#love-in-the-time-of-ebola>

4/ My husband helped me to survive Ebola

<https://backintouch.org/story/#for-better-or-for-worse>

5/ These are the boys that fought Ebola

<https://backintouch.org/story/#gaddafi-and-the-tripoli-boys>



# Reading

Here are the 5 short stories: [https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Issue\\_493](https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Issue_493)

Learners can read all 5 stories, or one each, online or on the next 5 slides.

## Reading tasks:

1/ What are the stories? – read and tell the story to the others.

2/ Find, and underline, some important information for a report about Sierra Leone After Ebola.



## 1) My father's grave

Ebola destroyed my family. When I heard my relatives were sick, I was in Makeni, a day's journey away from my village, Kumala. At first I thought, let me go there, even if I die with them. But travelling was not allowed, so I could not go. I stopped eating. I thought I was going to be the only person left. Ebola killed my father and 26 other relatives. He died on 9 November 2014 – there were few treatment centres then, so they took him hundreds of kilometres to Bo. My father loved me so much since I was little. I was his eldest child. I caught polio when I was a baby and that made my mother ashamed of me. When I was young, she used to beat me and throw me outside. My father protected me. He was a big family man. He was 40 when he died, and he had four wives and 21 children.

The only thing my father and I did not agree about was education. He didn't think that girls should go to school. But I asked the leaders of my village about it. I believe education is so important, especially for disabled people – it means you can get a job, you can be independent. We can't do physical work like digging and planting. The elders put pressure on my father. He allowed me to study, but he said he would not pay for it. He believed that when Sierra Leonean children get educated they will not respect their families, they will not work on the farm or help cook; they will think they are kings and queens and not serve God.

I became independent. I made money from hairdressing to buy my uniform, and because I came top of my class, my teachers also fought for me, and later I won a scholarship to continue.

Later, my father changed. He was trying to go on a *hajj* to Mecca. And this had made him understand how important education is. He couldn't read or write, or speak English, and a brother (the only educated person in our family) did everything for him. Before Ebola, they were preparing to go. He came to Makeni and promised me that when he returned from Mecca, he would help me to finish my education. But then he died.

When my father died so far from home, my family felt great pain. When my father was buried, there was no respect for victims of Ebola. They did not bury him with respect – a big family man like him! My family cried a lot. We did not want my father to die like this. My brother said he would come to look for my father, when he had the money. But until now, 18 months after his death, he does not have enough money to come. We were also afraid we would not be able to find him. When *On Our Radar* came with *New Internationalist*, we travelled together to look for my father's grave. We got a copy of the death certificate with the number 187. The council said this number was on his burial place. But when we got there, we saw that it was not organized. All these people were just buried with sticks. You could not read many of the numbers. We began to search, but there were so many graves there. We searched for hours.

It felt like a disaster. I nearly lost hope. Then we saw some gravediggers who helped us – they remembered where they had buried him, from the date of his death. My heart was telling me it was around this one area. That's why I stayed looking around there. I found sticks that seemed to have similar numbers but not his. And that is where we found him in the end. That shows that maybe my father was directing me.

When I found him, I cried: 'My father, you have left the earth behind you, you left our home and died here where nobody knows you. The family are crying for you. There is no-one to take care of us, now we have lost you. We are left in God's hands.'

I felt that he could hear me and he was crying also. I felt closer to him, I felt he could see me. Even now, I feel he is with me.

The next day, we brought a permanent sign with his name. I was able to say the prayers that you must say when a Muslim dies in Sierra Leone. I blessed him 10 times in Arabic and that blessing will go direct to him. I asked God to take care of him, the way my father took care of me when I was small. My father died alone here, so the marker they gave him was not good enough. And it's the same for most of the people who died here without family. Most of the sticks in the graveyard have already faded or fallen down. Only the people with family in Bo got the proper markers.

I feel better now I have seen his grave. We have written a sign and placed a marker there. We cleaned around the area. Now that I have identified him, my family can come. I took photos of everything – the stick, the grave. I want to show my family everything exactly as it was. They will be proud of me – especially a disabled person like me; they wouldn't expect it. I feel happy that it was me that found my father's grave. When they come, they will not have to suffer, like I did.

## 2) I speak for the girls

Elizabeth Katta has collected children all through her life. The latest baby – seven months old – is her nephew. He was born in the Ebola crisis to her sister.

Ramata also helps with the baby. She is 16 and she came to live with Elizabeth 11 years ago. She's training to be a motor mechanic at DRIM.

Munda cries and then goes to sleep on Ramata. There is a lot of noise from workshops and sewing machines.

Elizabeth has a different hairstyle every day. She's a single parent and an activist for women's and disability rights. She's a friend to girls everywhere.

★★★

A child is the responsibility of everyone. Everyone helps! My sister's baby is healthy and he eats well – we're lucky.

The baby looks like his father, but he belongs to us, so we called him Munda, which means 'our own' in Mende. My sister had to go back to our village because there was more Ebola here in the city of Bo. There was no money or business, so she had to help out selling cake and cassava bread.

She met a boy. He was much older than her. I thought he was arrogant. He used to buy all the food she sold for his friends. He gave her the impression he could take care of her.

My sister loves Munda because he is her first baby. But she doesn't want to remember her pregnancy; it makes her cry if we speak of it. She's ashamed because the father said the baby was not his. She now lives with an older sister so she can go to school near Makeni, more than 100 kilometres from here. She telephones to ask about the baby every day.

Many girls got pregnant during Ebola. We call it '*pikin bon pikin*' (children having children). They were not going to school, and often had to support their families. I run a self-help group for 30 girls who have had obstetric fistula [a disability caused by very long labour in young girls that leads to incontinence], supported by Forward UK. Four of my girls got pregnant during the crisis.

Satta is one of them. At the time of Ebola she was 14, the eldest of five children. Her mother was a trader, so when the markets had to close, the family was hungry and she went to live with her aunt in Bo. The aunt sent her to sell roasted nuts by the road.

Satta met a man who helped her a lot. He was 22, had a good job building houses. He gave her 100,000 Leones (\$24) – more than her whole family income – and she slept with him. Later, when she got pregnant, he said he was not responsible. But the family make him take responsibility.

***Teenage pregnancy in Sierra Leone 1 in 4 girls aged 15-19 got pregnant or had babies in 2013 40-65% increase in pregnancy in some areas during Ebola***

Satta had a complicated labour that lasted three days and ended in a caesarean. The baby died and she suffered obstetric fistula. It was terrible for her. Her friends laughed at her; her boyfriend beat her every night because she wet his bed. One night, he beat her so badly that she returned home to her parents. Then he left her.

I took Satta for treatment at the West Africa Fistula Foundation in Bo government hospital. They repair the damage caused by childbirth. Satta tells me that she will never accept a man like that again. She works with me to warn other girls of the dangers. My girls say: 'Obstetric fistula stops with me.'

To me, Ebola was terrible for women. We had to look after everyone and we suffered sexual exploitation by men. I speak up for the girls of Sierra Leone. I really want to change this story. What happened to Satta and my sister gives me the strength and courage to continue working for change. I don't want other girls to suffer. I want things to change in this country.'

### 3) Love without touch

I started university in the middle of the Ebola crisis. I was excited about university I hoped to make friends and have a lot of fun. But Ebola stopped that. The University of Makeni now had strict rules: no hugging, no touching, no shaking of hands, regular temperature checks and hand washing. Students were afraid of other students. There were reports of new cases every day at the university – other students and lecturers.

It was a sad, lonely time. I was at university one morning when I saw her. At first, I thought she was not real, a dream! She was walking to class in a red blouse and black shoes with her natural hair in plaits. I couldn't stop looking at her – the three-hour lecture passed in what felt like 30 minutes.

In 2014, Ebola spread through West Africa. It was the longest and biggest disease in history. When class finished, I went to speak to her. She told me her name, we exchanged phone numbers and she disappeared.

It was hard to start anything at university. Everybody was watching, ready to say: 'This is Ebola! Be careful.' We were afraid. So we started to talk on the phone. We used WhatsApp, text messages, and called.

It started slowly. It was difficult to get to know each other without touching. I didn't know her address. But as time went on, we got closer. For six months, eighteen days, and eight hours, our relationship was only on the phone. We sent many WhatsApp messages till late at night. An hour without a message made me worry! But it was also fun. She said, 'Have you had breakfast?' I said no. 'OK I will WhatsApp you a cup of tea.' It was like living together.

One day there was a flood – it rains a lot in Makeni – and I was at home without food. I called her and asked if she had any food at home. She said, 'I'll send a boat with some food, give me 45 minutes.' Exactly 45 minutes later she called and said, 'We have a problem. Immigration officers have taken the boat because it's not licensed.'

Sometimes it was crazy. I felt like I was in prison for the first time. I thought about her all the time. I asked myself, 'How long can I do this?'

When we waited 42 days for Sierra Leone to be free from Ebola, it gave us new hope. I counted every day with many others, and when the final day came, we arranged to meet at 7pm. I prepared really carefully. I checked my jacket again and again. When I finally got dressed, I was wearing black shoes and a tuxedo with a black bow-tie. I'd asked her to wear the same clothes as the day I saw her – and she'd told me to dress for a job interview. As I sat down, somebody touched me on my shoulder. She said, 'You can have the job!' She smiled full of happiness. I smiled and we hugged for more than five minutes.

We looked into each other's eyes for a long time, we breathed in and out together. It was a strong moment. Then finally we kissed. She spoke first: 'I missed you.' We talked for a long time. We spent half of the night out in Makeni, with the loud taxi horns, the shouts of 'Ebola Don Don!' (Ebola is finished!). Then we held hands and we walked three kilometres to my house where we sat and drank a toast to the end of Ebola, exams, and to our new relationship.

We still talk about the hug. We still remember it. We say it will be more important than our wedding day. It will be in our hearts forever.

#### 4) My husband helped me to survive Ebola

Mamie Lebbi lives in Sokoma and she was the first person to have Ebola in Sierra Leone. She was also one of the first to survive. She sits for the interview and looks annoyed. She is a slim, strong woman in her early forties. Her husband watches. He is smaller and looks more friendly. For some reason, she did not receive a 'survivor's certificate' that gives good, free healthcare and money. And she is tired of interviews. She is now looking after three children from families who died from Ebola, and five children of her own.

★★★

When Ebola came, it was new to us. That's why so many people died. My best friend Siawanda had Ebola from a small village called Kpundo near here. She is free and open with everybody, so she helped to wash the body of a friend that died in Guinea. Then she got sick. Everyone who touched Siawanda died: her aunty, three of her children, and all of her doctors.

Her eldest daughter brought Ebola back to Sierra Leone. Soon, people were dying everywhere and no-one knew why. People thought it was cholera and no-one was vomiting blood like on the government Ebola posters. My husband's sister caught Ebola, and then his mother. I took care of her here in the village, and got Ebola myself. I went to the clinic in Koindu, which is eleven kilometres away. They treated me the way they treat cholera. They took a blood sample from me. After a week it was clear that I had Ebola. I was very afraid. Now I was sick and I thought I would die within 21 days. They took me to Kenema hospital - Sierra Leone's only isolation unit for Lassa fever. I trusted the clinic in Koindu and I did not want to go to that hospital. I knew that Mercy, a nurse from the clinic, died there. And I was afraid that I would not survive the journey. And I was afraid that, if I died there, my people would never see my grave.

I believed that I had Ebola. Ebola had already killed three households of my family but then doctors said there was no cure. There were no specialists for Ebola and people were dying everywhere. Now we have foreigners to help, but then there were no treatment centres. People were just left in the hospital and it was in God's hands if you died or survived.

The community did not let them take me to Kenema. They said: 'It's not Ebola, you can't take her.' I am very strong and after the treatment at the clinic in Koindu I could stand, so I decided to run away. I walked out of the clinic at 2am. Other people tried to escape like me. Their families carried them out. In the morning I caught a motorbike to try to cross the Guinean border but they brought me back. I thought the authorities would look for me, so I hid. I hid for two weeks in the bush. At night, I slept in an old storeroom.

My husband decided to stay with me. He said: 'She caught Ebola from my family and I will not leave her. If God thinks we should die, then we will die, but I will stay with her.' He was like a father to me. He knew that I had Ebola, so he knew what to do: he stopped body contact with me. When I was sick at the clinic, everyone in his family died.

He sat three metres away from me and talked to me to help me to be strong. He brought me food and Panadol. When he went away, he sent my mother to watch me. When I was in the bush, I had one cup, spoon and plate, which he washed with chlorine. He put the food on the ground near me. At first I could not eat; with Ebola you lose your appetite. I remember the first thing I wanted was pineapple.

I worried about my children at home, and the family I lost. But I trusted God. After I survived in the bush, I felt God had saved us. I hugged my husband as I did before. Our relationship is stronger now.

## 5) These are the boys who fought Ebola

*The Tripoli Boys live in Moa Wharf, a slum in Freetown, Sierra Leone. 'Colonel Qadafi' leads the group of 40 young men. Moa Wharf is one of Sierra Leone's worst slums. 8,000 people live there in one square kilometre.*

*Here was the first Ebola case in April 2015. It seemed like the end.*

*But the Tripoli Boys in Moa Wharf became leaders in the fight against Ebola. People thought the Tripoli Boys were always in trouble – drinking, taking drugs, fighting, and stealing. But when the Tripoli Boys joined the WHO and the Social Mobilization Action Consortium, people changed their minds about them.*

*The Tripoli Boys come together for the interview in the headquarters, where baby pigs are sleeping on the dirty floor. They will sell the pigs to make some money. Qadafi says he gives shelter and opportunity to the Boys. They have to fill out an application form to join.*

★★★

My name is Five-0 (it means 'people will die for you'). I got the name because I try to help people.

I had a bad relationship with the leaders. But the Ebola training gave us the opportunity to work with community leaders. We learned how to win people's trust, they taught us about the illness, how people could protect themselves. We told them it is OK and you can bring out your sick and that we will not kill them. They were worried about that. We made them feel better – 'Do not be afraid, come and tell us how you are feeling. We will take you to the hospital and then see that you come back.' That was what we did.

Our leader Qadafi caught Ebola but he lived. While he was sick, someone burned his fishing boat and there were floods here. Seven of our boys died from Ebola. When we saw that our people were suffering, that gave us the courage to do this work, not for ourselves, but for everyone. When we helped, Ebola began to go away. I believe it is thanks to us that this place is not empty and that not everyone died.

We are happy Ebola is finished. But we would like people to know about the work we did, so that people will say, 'These are the boys who helped to fight against Ebola!' We don't want to live here with the pigs. We have nothing to do...! We want to work with other people. Then we can do more in the community, not only here, but for all the country. We want people to say, 'These are the boys! These are the boys who fought Ebola!' Then, if we wear our 'Kick Ebola Out' T-shirts on the street, people will know us.

# Speaking/writing: a report

- 1/ In groups, tell the others your story and then ask 2 questions each.
- 2/ Together, write a short report for a charity.

Your report can look like this:

**Charity:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Title: After Ebola – the people of Sierra Leone and their stories**

**Facts:** .....

**Human stories:** .....

**What we have learnt:** .....

# Homework:

Did we learn the right lessons from Ebola?

Read this Easier English article to find out:

[https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Did we learn the right lessons from Ebola%3F](https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Did_we_learn_the_right_lessons_from_Ebola%3F)

